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SUBJECT: RPP CONGRESS OFFICIALLY NOMINATES GUELLEH FOR
RE-ELECTION AS PRESIDENT

Summary

¶1. (U) The RPP (People's Rally for Progress), the ruling party in the Djiboutian Government, held its annual Central Committee Congress October 6 and 7. The two-day event consisted of an ordinary session of the central committee, a body of 250 members gathered from around the country, and a second extraordinary session designating the party's candidate for the coming 2005 presidential elections. The congress nominated, as predicted, current President of the Republic of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh, as candidate for his own succession. Guelleh spoke on a broad base of national concerns in an address that seemed more like a campaign program. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The President of the People's Rally for Progress Party (RPP), Ismail Omar Guelleh, vice-president, Dileita Mohamed Dileita (Prime Minister of Djibouti), and General Secretary, Idriss Arnaoud Ali (President of the National Assembly), presided over and spoke at the October 6-7 congress in which the RPP nominated its candidate, Ismail Omar Guelleh, for President of Djibouti. Hundreds of party members and sympathizers, as well as all members of government, community and religious leaders attended the Congress. Guelleh gave a detailed assessment of what has been done in the RPP and emphasized that all party members and sympathizers should have knowledge about the political, economic and social situation of the country. He praised the 250 RPP Central Committee members for their critiques on the functioning of the party.

¶3. (U) The General secretary reviewed the general policy of the party and its activity report. For the time being, RPP has 34 satellite offices spread throughout country. He asked the President of the party to think about how to fund political parties broadly since the multiparty concept is integral to the country's political infrastructure and political parties in Djibouti now have some serious financial problems that might jeopardize or compromise their existence. A juridical framework must be found for funding political associations. "It would be democratically and politically correct that political parties benefit from public funding," the Secretary General added. On visits of party officials to the different satellite offices, he said the main complaints heard were about unemployment and lack of state documentation, such as the National Identity Card. The 2004 budget of the RPP is 23 millions FDJ (130 000 USD), of which 70% is provided by the state.

¶4. (U) The second day of the congress was the official nomination of Ismail Omar Guelleh as the RPP candidate for re-election as president in 2005. Prime Minister Deleita announced the name of the candidate, which was followed by a standing ovation. The RPP is in an alliance composed of three other parties, FRUD (Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy), PPSD (Peoples Social democratic Party) and PND (National Democratic Party). The coalition parties were also represented at the congress. Mr. Aden Robleh Awaleh, president of PND, sent a press release from South Africa, where he is currently working as a Permanent Member of the Parliament of the African Union, supporting the candidacy of Guelleh. Guelleh requested an appointment with the other political parties in the ruling coalition, after the month of Ramadan at the end of November, to consider adopting a joint strategy.

¶5. (U) In his acceptance speech before the congress, Guelleh drew an overall picture of what appeared to be his program for his second mandate. He emphasized that improving the situation of the poor is a necessary task. "Actions have to be taken to promote social and economic progress for our weakest fellow-citizens, the most vulnerable and most fragile ones" he said. Addressing government officials he stated, "Whichever person is eager to be invested in the destiny of the national community must be measured by his capacity for

humility, responsibility and competence while subjecting himself to the regulations of the Constitution." In remarks clearly directed at Djibouti's youth, Guelleh said he wanted to give back to the youth both confidence and initiative. For women in Djibouti, they should have their rightful place and role in the national community. As for economic policy, Guelleh said he wanted it targeted towards the needs of human beings so that poverty can be reduced. He said in his speech, he wished to launch a massive campaign of literacy programs in rural areas. He said that a sound economy exists where reasonable choices are made, and is founded on "transparency, respect for universal management norms, and macroeconomic stability".

16. (U) The means and logistics put in place to guarantee a large gathering for the congress were primarily ground transportation. Buses were rented to transport party members and sympathizers from all over the country. Photos of the president and copies of speeches in French and Arabic were distributed to all 800 persons present in the Congress Palace.

RAGSDALE